Circuit Clerk's Office Increases Efficiency

The following article was recently published in the Jasper local newspaper, **The Daily Mountain Eagle**.

With the assistance of the Administrative Office of Courts (AOC) in Montgomery, the Walker County Circuit Clerk's office has moved to a paperless office in their civil court division using Ala-File and Alacourt – Alabama's electronic filing system. Officials with the AOC confirm that Walker County is among the first counties in the state to maintain all of the civil court files in electronic format. AlaFile, started in 2006 as a pilot program in a few select counties, allows lawyers to submit court documents to the clerk's offices in electronic format as an alternative to filing in paper. Since that time, AlaFile has been expanded and is now available in all 67 counties.

The Walker County Circuit Clerk's office has excelled in scanning all of the "paper-filed" documents. According to Circuit Clerk Susan Odom, every civil and criminal case is scanned into the electronic system, which then allows judges in all courtrooms to view documents and access cases filed via their computer. Odom's office reports that over 12,000 documents have been filed electronically since the system was implemented and that over 1.5 million pages of documents have been scanned into the application. The public can also obtain access to public court files electronically. By enabling access to these electronic files for court personnel and the public, significant gains in accessibility and efficiency have been realized.

The goal of AlaFile and Alacourt is to provide electronic filing and storage of documents in the court system while improving the efficiency and accessibility of the courts. Due to the hard work of court personnel and elected officials like Circuit Clerk Susan Odom, the applications continue to grow, as evidenced by the fact that nearly 8,200 attorneys have already registered for Ala-File. AOC, with the assistance and input of court personnel and judges, will continue to work to improve the capacity of these electronic filing applications to provide a better service to the citizens of Alabama. "We are certainly proud of the leadership and dedication to service demonstrated by Suzie and the members of her staff. The Walker County Clerk's Office and court officials are to be commended for their vision and willingness to implement technology in their work," stated Callie T. Dietz, Administrative Director of Courts.

Fun Facts!

Test your knowledge of Alabama

1. What is the deepest gorge in the U.S. east of the Rockies?
2. Who is the famous African-American minister who preached at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church?
3. What does the Indian word for Alabama (Alibamu) mean?
4. Alabama's first white settlement was started in 1702 by what country?
5. What Alabamian, later to become famous, was taught by Anne Sullivan?
6. Who wrote the words to Alabama's state song?
7. Can you name the Alabamian who had a hit song called, *Ramblin' Rose*?
8. What aviation milestone occurred in Alabama in 1910?
9. What city is called the *Cradle of the Confederacy*?
10. What Leeds, Alabama native was a member of the U.S. Olympic *Dream Team*?
11. What is the official state rock?
12. Can you name the Alabamian who was Vice President of the United States?
13. Olympic champion Jesse Owens came from what Alabama town?
14. What boxing title did Joe Louis hold?
15. What is Alabama's largest mining industry?
16. Can you name the Centre, Alabama, man who patented a typewriter in 1866?
17. What prominent author from Alabama wrote *Fried Green Tomatoes*?
18. Can you name the Alabamian who sang *Stand by Your Man*?
19. What African-American woman refused to give up her seat and thereby started the Montgomery Bus Boycott?
20. The novel *To Kill A Mockingbird* was written by what Alabamian?

http://www.archives.state.al.us/activity/Actvty24.html

Growth and Change are Inevitable

By Michael E. McMaken

> "It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory."
> - W. Edwards Deming

I have learned a lot of lessons in life from my children… especially my daughter, Michelle. She has Down Syndrome and she can operate every DVD player and TV in the house … because … SHE WANTS TO WATCH HER MOVIES. At the same time, my wife struggles with the DVD player every single time she wants to watch a movie. (Please do not repeat that!) I was thinking about that and … well, it led me to think about some other things.

I have given a bit of thought to the topic of how we might encourage more people to use the AlaCourt system. When AlaCourt Plus is more fully implemented I believe there will be significant improvements that will be readily apparent to everyone who is using the system. That will not be the case obviously with those people who are not using the system at all. Further, it will be difficult to convince those (non) users that it is "a better mousetrap" with just talk.

> If you are in a bad situation; don't worry, it will change… If you are in a good situation; don't worry, it will change.
> - John A. Simone, Sr.

I respectfully submit that it is necessary to demonstrate to the typical non-user what technology can do just in general. From that point AlaCourt can be introduced in incremental phases depending on the user's area of responsibility. If one can show even the smallest benefit to the use of technology it can make the process less intimidating. If a Judge sees just one benefit they might be more willing to consider other technology assistance. Hey! If we were smart enough to get elected, we might just be smart enough to figure out where the "on" button is on a computer. I really think that more video presentations on basic computer issues can help a great deal. There are many things that can be helpful to people when they learn to use the computer to do things for them.

Consider that some of the following are every day computer tasks for some of us and totally foreign/alien tasks to others of us: *E-mail, attachments, cutting and pasting, find and replace, re-formatting a document, document templates, order templates, mailing lists, making personal folders, entering calendar items, reminder alarms on calendar entries, syncing one's phone to one's computer to transfer calendar and contact information, making notes, creating rules for one's inbox, backing up data, thumb drives, burning CDs, listening to a music file, and inserting a picture in an email, etc.* ... these are all relatively little things that can make the computer much more attractive and less scary. When it works for you instead of against you it makes a huge difference. We have to get people to actually want to use the computer at all in some cases.

Playing a computer game may be a waste of time ... or it may be the way one can learn to like computers and make them work FOR you. Consider that millions of kids are using computers because they liked to play games ... first. Now they use computers for everything. Playing a game is not all bad. Chess, checkers, Pong, etc are JUST games ... but think what games teach us. We learn by playing as kids. We can do the same thing as adults. Play is not all bad. (Some of you ARE old enough to remember "PONG", …. Right?)

I do not think this is an "age" issue alone. (Perhaps partly so.) It is an educational issue, a training issue and a psychological issue in some ways. People sometimes fear what they do not understand. We do not need to explain networking in all it's intricacies, but we do need to show the usefulness of the thing. We definitely need to implement more training on the use of AlaCourt on a more global scale but we can also do a lot one-on-one if we want to take the time to make the effort. It will not necessarily be an easy task, however, it is the proverbial "journey of a thousand miles" and we have not really taken that "first step" ... on the personal level. We need to reach out and show how the technology can make just one thing easier ... in some way. We cannot do this by bullying, dictating or intimidation. We need to be sensitive to the fact that people do not want to "look stupid". We need to approach this with some ingenuity, patience and a little sense of humor. People get (already are) angry about the problems caused by technology ... especially when the system is down or processes too slowly to get the job done.

> "Change is inevitable—except from a vending machine."
> - Robert C. Gallagher

We have all heard it said that we may be a "Unified Judicial System" but we are not a UNIFORM Judicial System. We may never be the latter. I do not know. After 22 years on the bench, I suppose that I have become cynical enough to believe that may be the case. We still need to learn how to grow and change is inevitable. IF we really do want to help someone learn how to adapt to change we need to know a little about the world in which they are told to use AlaCourt ... it may be different enough from my world that I need to re-think how it can help them. If I do not know their "issues", it is more difficult for me to make a positive and helpful suggestion. Let us think a bit more "out of the box". Let us stretch ourselves a bit more. Let us share more information.

This is one man's opinion ...for what it is worth ... and I do realize that "a man's got to know his limitations."
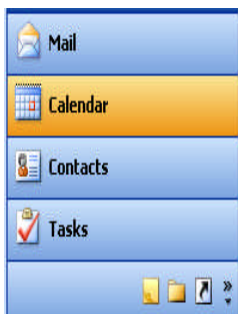- **Judge Michael E. McMaken, Mobile District Court**
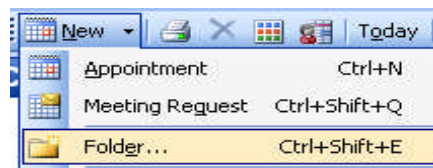
Technology Tip!

Print a Blank 2009 Calendar from Microsoft Outlook

A blank calendar is helpful in several situations. Perhaps you're attending a project planning meeting and need a calendar to flush out important project milestones. You don't want to deface your own calendar with all the information, so print a blank calendar from Outlook instead.
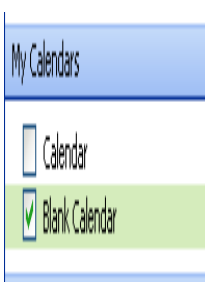
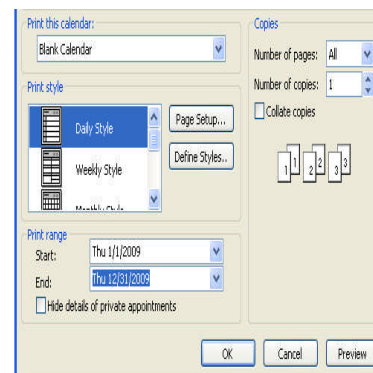### To create a blank calendar, complete the following steps:

- Click on the Calendar icon in the Navigation Pane within Microsoft Outlook

- Click the New button's arrow and select Folder

- In the Create New Folder Dialog box, you will need to give the folder a name, such as 'Blank Calendar', in the Name text box. Select the *calendar folder* from the **Select Where to Place the Folder** list box, if necessary.

- Then click OK.

To print the calendar you will need to:

- Select the Blank Calendar check box from the **My Calendars** section of the navigation pane and deselect all others.

- Choose File and then Print from the Outlook menu bar.

- Select a style from the Print Style list box and enter dates in the Start and End text boxes in the Print Range Section.

- Click OK and your 2009 calendar prints.

Answers to Fun Facts—Test your knowledge of Alabama

1. Little River Canyon near Fort Payne, Alabama
2. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
3. *Thicket Clearers*
4. France
5. Helen Keller
6. Julia Tutwiler
7. Nat "King" Cole
8. The first night flight
9. Montgomery
10. Charles Barkley
11. Marble
12. William Rufus King
13. Oakville
14. Heavyweight Champion of the World
15. Coal
16. John Pratt
17. Fannie Flagg, formerly of Birmingham
18. Tammy Wynette
19. Rosa Parks
20. Harper Lee